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CUNEIFORM TABLETS

Through the courtesy of Dr. Albert T. Clay, of Yale University, the Pennsylvania Museum has been given the opportunity to purchase a small but representative series of seventeen cuneiform tablets illustrative of the palæography of Mesopotamia from the early Ur dynasty (King Dungi, B. C. 2382-2324) to the Neo-Babylonian dynasty which is exemplified by texts of the Biblical Nebuchadnezzar (604-561) and Nabonidus, father of Belshazzar (B. C. 555-539).

While most of the texts are from Ur (Mugheir), Uruk (Warka Erech); Larsa (Senkereh); with one from Derhem and one from Jokha, they contain royal names of a number of kings, and some represent distinct historical epochs. Thus, beginning with Dungi of Ur, and Ibe-Sin, from whose reign we have a list of animals (B. C. 2382-2324); Uruk, is represented by King Sin-Gashid (c. B. C. 2100), "the mighty hero, King of Erech; King of Amnanum; Patron of the temple of Ana," etc.; and the great Semitic conqueror and lawgiver Hammurabi, B. C. 2000, by a case tablet that bears his name. The King of Isin, Rim-Sin, who was overthrown by Hammurabi, is also represented by a tablet dated of the sixth year of his reign.

There are two documents of the reign of Bur-Sin, son of King Dungi of Ur. One is a "bulla," a sort of warrant for payment of an elder dated in Bur-Sin's eighteenth year; the other is a temple record. A similar document, also of the Ur dynasty, is from the reign of Gimil-Sin (B. C. 2315-2304); while a record of payment for drink, oil, cereals, and other things for messengers from Southern Babylonia, of the same period, comes from Jokha. Two school exercises of those old days, are also interesting.

In the small Neo-Babylonian series, all of which are derived from Uruk, are a pay roll of the reign of Evil-Merodach (B. C. 561-559); a small and very clear tablet dated in the twenty-first year of King Nebuchadnezzar (583 B. C.); that is, four years before the destruction of Jerusalem; and lastly a tablet dating from the reign of Nabonidus, the father of Belshazzar, which refers to a loan of twelve mina at interest.

It is the practise of the Professor of Semitic Archæology in Yale University, Dr. Clay, under whose care is the Semitic Museum, to receive from agents abroad in Bagdad, Paris, London, etc., shipments of Babylonian tablets. After selecting from them such as fill up the gaps in the Yale series, or are of value for publication, the surplus, representing duplicates or other specimens that are not deemed important for already extensive collections, is then disposed of to other museums less developed in this branch; or, as in the present case, who, without specializing in Babylonian Archæology, are glad to possess an illustrative series of undoubted provenance for educational purposes and for use as object-lessons in lecturing to students on palæography and the development of script in its various aspects. For this purpose the above series will prove invaluable.

S. Y. S.